UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/817
22 October 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 22 OCTOBER 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you that on 3 October 1997, the fourth Ministerial Meeting of the ad hoc Special Conference on Liberia (previously known as the ad hoc Special Conference to Support the Peace Process in Liberia) was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting was organized in consultation with the Government of the United States of America on behalf of the International Contact Group for Liberia, the Government of Nigeria on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Government of the Netherlands. In addition to those Governments, the meeting brought together the members of the International Contact Group on Liberia, the European Union and ECOWAS, as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the African Development Bank, and relevant United Nations departments, programmes and specialized agencies. The Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS also participated in the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to build upon the momentum generated by the successful completion of the Liberian peace process, with a view towards supporting efforts to consolidate the peace in Liberia, including the establishment of a viable framework for the mobilization of resources for reconstruction and development. In this regard, the Government of Liberia prepared for presentation at the Special Conference, a paper outlining its vision for a new Liberia, entitled "An Agenda for Rebuilding Liberia".

In my opening statement to the Special Conference I urged the members of the international community to support peace-building efforts in Liberia and to help ensure that the conditions for conflict did not again materialize in that country. In particular, I noted the difficulties that still remained, including the fact that economic activity remained modest, that much of the population continued to be displaced, that most of the demobilized fighters had yet to be absorbed into reintegration programmes, that basic institutions and services were not yet fully operational and that the situation in Sierra Leone remained a source of concern.

Despite these obstacles, however, I noted the very positive steps that President Taylor had taken towards reconciliation and national unity, and noted

the formation in Liberia of a broad-based and inclusive Government, together with the President's expressed commitment to promoting the protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law. I informed participants that the proposed United Nations Peace-building Support Office would soon be established in Liberia, and that the Head of the Office would be the focal point for the Organization's post-conflict peace-building activities in Liberia and have overall responsibility for harmonizing the efforts of the United Nations system in the country. I called upon the members of the international community to show the same generosity and goodwill in supporting the peace-building process as they did in supporting the peace process.

I am pleased to report that the meeting successfully accomplished the objectives for which it had been convened. In addition to focusing international attention on the need to provide continued support to Liberia following the successful completion of the peace process, the meeting was notable for:

- The strong support expressed by participants for the establishment of a United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia;

- The broad political support expressed by participants for President Taylor's efforts to establish an inclusive administration, and for the various actions taken by the new Government to promote reconciliation and national unity (although some participants expressed concern regarding certain recent actions taken by the Liberian police);

- The continued assurances given by the Government of Liberia regarding its commitment to reconciliation, national unity and respect for human rights;

- The very positive reaction of participants to the Government's plans for rebuilding Liberia, as set out in the "Agenda for Rebuilding Liberia", which was prepared by the Government for the Conference;

- The supportive attitude adopted by the Bretton Woods Institutions towards the new Government's economic and political initiatives, specifically including the framework outlined in the "Agenda for Rebuilding Liberia", the economic and customs reforms instituted thus far and the presentation to the Legislature of a balanced cash-based budget;

- The support expressed by participants for a donor's conference for Liberia, which would most likely take place early next year.

In view of the difficult peace consolidation and reconstruction challenges that Liberia continues to confront, it is my intention to continue to move as expeditiously as possible with the establishment of a United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia, as requested by the Government of Liberia. I am encouraged in this undertaking by the very broad support expressed by the international community for this initiative and by the positive cooperation demonstrated by all parts of the United Nations system, in keeping with the spirit of my reform proposals.

The Secretariat will be consulting with the Government of Liberia and the principal bilateral and multilateral donors on the most effective means of following up on the positive outcome of the meeting, including the timing of the anticipated donor's conference on reconstruction and development.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN